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Brief to the Alberta Commission on Educa
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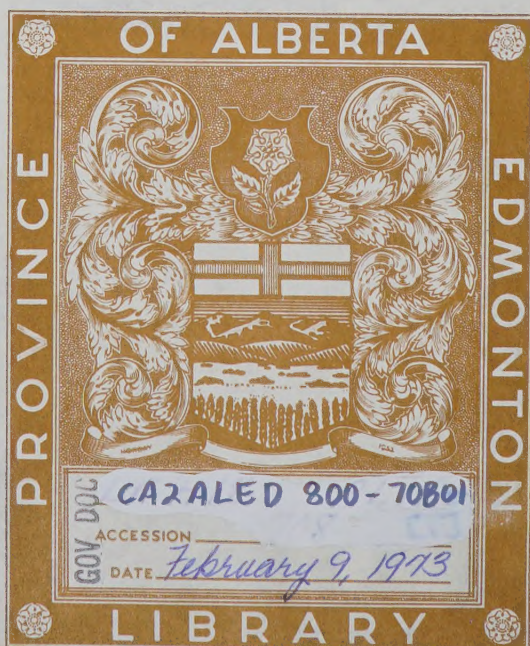
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Submission to

COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

March, 1970

INTRODUCTION

A document outlining the educational plan for a system for several decades in the future will be, in all probability, a very comprehensive and massive document. Submissions made by organizations to a planning body formulating such an educational plan for the future must be, if the submissions are not to become massive documents, general and/or selective.

Since experts have been invited to prepare in-depth statements in special areas, it was felt unnecessary to attempt other than a general statement in such areas. Further, it was felt that it was not the function of a particular interest group to attempt to assess, interpret and prepare a critique of other sectors of public education in the Province. A special interest group might comment, however, on other sectors of public education insofar as they impinge upon the special interest group's field of concern. For these reasons this submission will be rather selective in the areas chosen for discussion and some of these areas will be treated in only a general fashion.

The Commission on Educational Planning has the responsibility of assessing the information provided by all interest groups. From the information provided, reoccurring themes may become evident and these themes may be used to serve as the basis for progress in the decades ahead.

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Role of the Commission on Educational Planning

The Commission on Educational Planning has been charged with specific tasks according to the charter establishing the Commission. The terms of reference for the Commission, however, may or may not be fully endorsed by an interest group. Since an interest group's submission is influenced by its concept of the appropriate role to be played by the Commission on Educational Planning, a brief statement of views on this matter appears in order.

The Alberta Colleges Commission believes that no individual or group can accurately predict the nature of society and the needs of individuals within that society three decades in the future. The view is also held that no individual or group should have the power to dictate what should be the structure of the society and the roles of individuals within that society. Major decisions affecting the society as a whole should be left to the legislative process favored by that society.

An educational system and the society encompassing the educational system have certain aspects which have some degree of permanency as well as some aspects which are transitory in nature. A major task of the Commission on Educational Planning should be the determination of those aspects of the society and the educational system which have some degree of permanency, and from these aspects formulate a general framework suitable for the educational system in the decades ahead. Another task should be the development of some means to provide continuous input into the educational system in order to keep its structure and operations relevant to the society within which it operates. A further task might be the provision of some initial direction to the educational system.

Organization of the Submission

The initial part of the submission will examine some aspects of the development of Western public education, the political orientation of an area, the prevailing philosophies within an area, and the general purposes of public education. While it is recognized that the above are not discrete each can, nevertheless, contribute to the development of a structure for public education. A suggested possible macro view of the system is also presented in this part of the submission.

The latter part of the submission very briefly outlines a few developments in the non-university post-secondary educational system. Since extensive discussion with a wide variety of interested publics formed the basis for the formulation of the provisions found in The Colleges Act, and since the Act was to be future-oriented and the provisions of the Act are being only now implemented, it was felt that a repetition of the provisions for the new non-university post-secondary educational system in this submission would be unnecessary. The submission does contain, however, some implications for future modifications of post-secondary education in the Province.

SYSTEM CONSIDERATIONS

An educational system operates within and serves the larger society of which it is a part. Certain aspects of the educational system and the encompassing society have some degree of permanency and it is from the aspects that have some degree of permanency that a general structure for education may be formulated.

Historical Perspective

The structure that exists for an educational system has developed and/or been imposed to achieve the stated or implied purposes of the system. If structure is viewed as being that which merely facilitates the educational process, then, purposes must be basic and structure secondary in the consideration of an educational system.

The purposes of Western public education have changed considerably over the last several centuries as the public education that was offered increasingly reflected the movement from a religiously controlled and oriented system to a non-sectarian position. The purposes have been, however, more implied than stated.

The structures for public educational systems also have changed over the years as the purposes have changed. When Canadian education is considered, it is apparent that growth rather than deliberate building has taken place. The process has been evolutionary rather than planned. The structures have been more in response to existing conditions than planned on some rational basis.

The changes made in the past for educational systems have resulted from a post facto recognition of changes that have occurred in society.

During the past, when the development of knowledge and corresponding change took place at a snail's pace, the educational systems would lag only fractionally behind the current situation. At the present time with the body of knowledge doubling every decade or less change is rapid, and educational changes taking place according to the tradition of the past can result in the entire educational system being suitable for an "era" removed one or more times from the current period.

The Alberta Situation. The existing structure for public education in Alberta has resulted from conditions being imposed upon the North-West Territories; Ontario and Quebec structures being used as models in developing the initial system of public education; and an evolutionary process after the establishment of the first system.

The Federal Government imposed a separate school system upon the North-West Territories.¹ The School Ordinances drafted by the North-West Territorial Council to provide for public education within the North-West Territories had to contain provisions for separate schools. The dual system from Quebec was used as a model for establishing the system while the Ontario provisions for public education became the pattern used within the Protestant Section.

The early provisions for public education gradually changed in response to social, economic and political pressures within the Province. The changes were more evolutionary than planned. The purposes of education have been more implied than stated. This past experience should not be taken, however, as the model to be followed in the future.

¹ Statutes of Canada, 38 Victoria, Ch. 49 (1875), S. 11.

Philosophy and School Systems

Every system of education is based on a philosophy of life.² As we look upon life so we teach. What we believe, the loyalties to which we hold, subtly determine the content and the method of our teaching. Each of us has a philosophy whether or not he has thought it through and definitely phrased it. Everything we say and do as well as what we think reflects that philosophy.³

Philosophy, used in the broad sense of referring to the basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes, can be applied to individuals and groups. It may refer to the basic position held by an individual or the general orientation of an entire group within a specific geographic area. Individuals may be categorized as belonging to various philosophic schools of thought according to the commonality of certain basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes.

It is to this area that we look for aspects exhibiting the quality of having some degree of permanency. From the aspects exhibiting the quality of permanency, suitable structures for education in the future may be established.

Orientation of an Area. Orientation of an area is used in the sense of the general political climate that exists within the area.⁴ In considering the general orientation of an area, and its implications for education, two

²John S. Brubacher (Editor), Eclectic Philosophy of Education, New York : Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951, p. 8.

³Harold O. Rugg, The Great Technology, New York : John Day Company, 1933 p. 258.

⁴This general political climate might arise from the populace or be imposed upon the populace. The means by which the political climate of an area is created is not considered important to this submission and is therefore not discussed.

continuums are considered. These are the democratic-totalitarian and capitalistic-socialistic continuums. Both have some implications for education.

Democratic education tends to treat a child as an end and the education of the child aims to develop an ability in the child to make up his own mind about that which he should believe, and about that which is to be considered worthy of his allegiance.⁵ Non-democratic education assumes that owing to intellectual and moral inequality of men, the true form of social-political organization requires that a few individuals of outstanding ability control and dictate to the rest.⁶

The objectives of capitalistic and socialistic education are quite different. Capitalistic education tends to train for individual achievement usually in the business world, and the acquisition of wealth is lauded as a high achievement. Socialistic education tends to train for collective achievement on behalf of group welfare. The aim is to develop socially minded beings in accordance with the accepted ideology.⁷

Individual Philosophies. Just as a general orientation for an area may exist, various individuals and groups within the area may adhere to philosophical positions congruent with, compatible to, or in opposition to the prevailing orientation of the area.

⁵ John L. Childs, Education and Morals, New York : Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950, p. 136.

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Future of Our Educational Institutions, (J. M. Kennedy, trans.), Edinburgh : T.N. Foulis, 1909, p. 74.

⁷ Jerome Davis, "Education Under Communism Contrasted with that Under Capitalism," Journal of Educational Sociology, 9 : 166, November, 1935.

Idealism, materialism, realism and pragmatism are main schools of philosophy to which individuals or groups may adhere. The philosophical position held by individuals and groups will influence the nature of the educational process and the structure for the system. Idealism, materialism and realism imply closed systems in that facts are gathered and work is done to progress towards the ultimate truth. Pragmatism implies an open system in which truth is the current state of knowledge, a changing thing. Closed systems are indoctrination systems. In the past, communities and societies have flourished because of similarities of views. Open systems permit many points of view and, in permitting many points of view within a single community or society, create new social problems.

The nature of the educational process and the structure imposed in order to facilitate the educational process depends partly upon the philosophical position held by individuals and groups within the area concerned. The satisfaction with the educational process and the structure will depend upon the degree of consensus that exists in relation to the accepted philosophical orientation.

In a pluralistic society, it is questionable whether a single tightly structured system will be acceptable to all interest groups. Either a single system with considerable provisions within the system for variation or a multi-track system may be necessary.

Current Trends. The political orientation of an area is usually a reflection of the general philosophical orientation of the people of the area. The general orientation of an area cannot be neatly separated from the purposes of education for the area, nevertheless some general comments on what may be the prevailing trends in the Province might provide a useful background setting for the educational system that is envisioned.

A suggested trend, which should be relatively non-controversial, is that the democratic orientation within the Province will continue. This will imply that the educational process will emphasize the child as an end and that the development of the ability of a child to make up his own mind about that which he should believe, and about that which is to be considered worthy of his allegiance will receive emphasis.

The probable future position on the capitalistic-socialistic continuum within the democratic orientation is not so clear. The educational process will be influenced, however, by the accepted orientation in this area. Probably the best that can be done is to attempt a projection on the basis of what appears to be changes to date.

As the urbanization of the country progressed and as a greater proportion of the working segment of society became employed by organizations, rather than being self-employed, there appears to have been a gradual increase in the support for political parties that might be considered socialistic in nature. The political platforms of existing parties appear to be gradually shifting leftwards on the socialistic-capitalistic continuum. There has been a general growing awareness of social needs in our complex society.

The economic concept that the "market place" provides the best mechanism for establishing prices for goods and labour is being questioned. An examination of the practices of large companies, conglomerates, and trade unions would suggest that the "market place" principle is no longer fully operative.

Keynesian economics no longer provides as certain an answer for the stabilization of the economy of a country. Sector inflation may affect the entire economy and measures applied to the total economy may have to be excessively harsh and brutal in order to establish a relatively stable condition. Control of specific sectors of the economy may be required and such control would be a departure from a pure capitalistic approach.

On the basis of the above, and on even less tangible criteria, it is suggested that the general orientation of the area will gradually move from the rugged free enterprise position. The movement will be towards a modified capitalistic approach which will place considerable emphasis upon the need for group effort for the general good of society as a whole. There will be an increasing emphasis upon developing socially minded individuals within the system.

At the present time there appears to be a gradual shift from what might be considered a closed system towards an open system. The growing acceptance of a pragmatic approach to many issues raises the question as to the type of structure for the educational system that will be best suited for the accommodation of many different points of view. The growing permissive approach to differing views provides one of the key challenges in the development of a suitable structure for the educational system of the future.

Summary. The general orientation of an area and the philosophical position held by the general populace have a marked degree of permanency and are likely only to change as succeeding generations with different outlooks gradually replace the current dominant generation group. It is suggested that the philosophical orientation of an area has a degree of permanency and can thus be considered in the establishment of a general structure for the educational system.

Purposes of Education

General agreement as well as disagreement may result when the purposes of education are considered. As the specificity of the purposes increases so will the probability that disagreement with the purposes will occur. Nevertheless there is general agreement on a few basic purposes of education and in this area, where there is some permanency, useful themes may arise which could assist in establishing a structure for public education.

The basic purposes of education are considered as being the following:

- (1) Ordering, preserving and transmitting of the important elements of the great cultures of the world, particularly our own.
- (2) To serve and improve society.
- (3) To develop the maximum potential of the individuals being educated.

The Alberta Colleges Commission would further hold that it is impossible to fully achieve all three purposes but that rather some balance of the purposes must be the objective in the total society. The balance envisioned by the Commission would be for a strong emphasis upon the third purpose with somewhat less emphasis on the first and second purposes.

More specific objectives for post-secondary education would arise as specific programs are considered. These objectives would arise from the general purposes outlined and would tend to delineate the place of a specific course in the total educational process.

Group and Individual Value Orientation. The Alberta Colleges Commission, while believing that it is possible to reach agreement on general purposes of education, recognizes that as objectives become more specific the differences in value orientation of individuals and groups comes into sharper focus. This is particularly so when the general purpose of "serving and improving society" is receiving some emphasis.

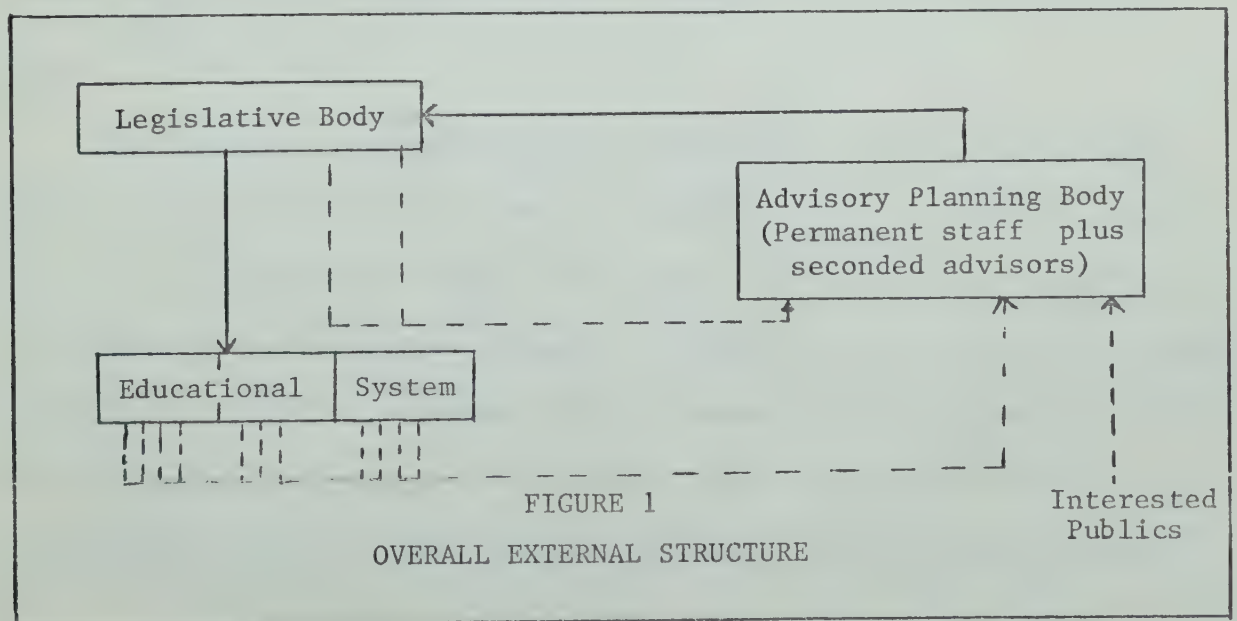
The Alberta Colleges Commission holds that the value question must be faced. Convictions concerning that which is most worthwhile in life will be a factor in any educational process that does more than provide for the routine transmission of factual data. The curriculum cannot avoid the value question, this is part of education. Education should bring values to a conscious level while permitting individual choice depending upon basic philosophic orientation.

Bringing value questions to the surface may be necessary if a single public school system is to be retained. Individuals should become familiar with and appreciate other points of view but should not be required to accept a particular value position. Such an approach should aid in preparing an individual to understand the total society rather than just one segment of society.

Summary. A degree of permanency exists insofar as basic purposes of education are concerned. As more specific objectives are considered, basic value differences of individuals and groups come into sharper focus. A basic general framework for education acceptable to almost all should be possible but such a general structure for education will have to make provision for considerable individual freedom.

Structure for the System

The Alberta Colleges Commission in holding that the educational system must reflect the current situation as well as anticipating future changes concludes that planning - used in the sense of preparing for the future and/or deciding in advance what is to be done - must be emphasized in the proposed structure for the system. It is the belief of the Commission that the planning of major guidelines should be done by a group that has primary responsibility to that task rather than primary responsibility to the administration of a system or the legislating for a system. The following structure is therefore proposed:



Planning within the educational system, within the guidelines established by the legislative body on the advice of the advisory planning body, would be done by personnel within the educational system. Recommendations for change in the general guidelines would originate from the educational system, advisory planning body or the legislative body. It is assumed that the advisory planning body would play a very active role in initiating change.

Systems and Sub-Systems

If sub-systems are to exist within the educational system, as suggested in Figure 1, then a rationale must exist for such an arrangement. If the basic purposes and balance of emphasis of the purposes for education at the various levels remain essentially the same, then different administrative groups and/or structures to facilitate reasonably identical educational processes does not seem reasonable nor desirable. If the educational processes and purposes are somewhat different, then a case exists for the development of sub-systems and administrative groups and/or structures to provide for the reasonably unique needs of certain levels of education.

The Commission suggests that the purposes of education previously listed receive a different balance of emphasis at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary level. The balance of emphasis on the purposes is such as to indicate that elementary education aims at the establishment of fundamental skills necessary for the pursuit of strategized inquiry; that secondary education is of a general nature achieved through a process of strategized inquiry; and that post-secondary education also proceeds

through a process of strategized inquiry but aims at being more specific, enabling a person to take a place in society. In summary, then, three sub-systems should exist. The first to have as its central aim the establishment of basic skills, the second sub-system to provide a general education, and the third sub-system having as a central theme the education of the individual to take a place in society.

The Commission holds that there should be three sub-systems within the total educational system and that one sub-system be concerned with all post-secondary educational institutions.

Finance

The future trends in the public sector⁸ of the economy must be carefully considered. Various services are provided through the public sector of the economy. Education is in competition with other services for a share of the resources available through the public sector. The educational services planned must be such that they can be realistically achieved within the economic context that will exist.

If a defensible rational distribution of resources in the total public sector is to be achieved, priorities will have to be established regarding competing services and the distribution of funds will have to be made according to the established priorities. Within a service such as education, the administrative structure established for the service will have to make provision for the establishment of means of determining priorities in order

⁸Some useful background information is provided in Otto Eckstein, Public Finance, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey : Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964.

that the available resources can be distributed to the various sub-systems on some rational basis.

Experts should be invited to prepare position papers on financing of the various services through the public sector of the economy. Experts should also prepare papers on administrative structures that might be established for the administration of the educational system which would permit the development of the system as envisioned by the Commission on Educational Planning.

COMMISSION VIEWS ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

In previous sections, the Commission has outlined some of the aspects basic to the consideration of any educational system, and some of the possible areas that might be used to establish a basic framework suitable for educational progress several decades into the future. A section providing specific views on and in-depth development of ideas for public education should be a second stage of development of a submission. In most cases, it might be advisable to delay the development of such a section of a submission until some agreement has been obtained on the desirable general structure to be established for the public educational system.

Since extensive discussion with a wide variety of interested publics formed the basis for the formulation of the provisions found in The Colleges Act and since the Act was to be future oriented and only now are the provisions of the Act being implemented, it was felt that a repetition of the provisions for the non-university post-secondary educational system in this submission would be unnecessary. This information can be readily obtained from existing documents.

The Alberta Colleges Commission believes that the overall concept of the college system is consistent with the position taken earlier in this submission. Some of the developments to date must be viewed as transitional in that certain developments must be intermediary in providing a reasonably smooth transition from an established structure to the new structure for post-secondary education. The overall experiences of the Alberta colleges in shifting to the new structure may provide useful information to the Commission on Educational Planning.

The Alberta Colleges Commission recognizes, however, that if a general structure for education is established which is at some variance with the developing structure for the college system, then a review of developments within the college system must take place. Under these circumstances, the Alberta Colleges Commission would be pleased to re-assess the position of the colleges and make a detailed submission on the basis of more current information.

CONCLUSIONS

The Alberta Colleges Commission believes that certain aspects of an educational system have a degree of permanency or are suitable to have permanency structurally imposed. The general orientation of an area and the aims and objectives of education are deeply rooted in the basic philosophical position held by the people and thus are not likely to change rapidly. Change is more likely to take place slowly as succeeding generations with different outlooks gradually replace the current dominant generation group. Educational structures such as planning committees, which by their very nature are to be flexible, may be suitable to be established as permanent structures of a system. The Alberta Colleges Commission would hold that these areas can be used to form the framework for an educational system suitable for the decades ahead.

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